

Wilbur-Ellis Reduces MSD Risk with Office Ergonomics Software



WILBUR-ELLIS

Summary

Wilbur-Ellis is a family-owned, global leader in agriculture technology and products, and in-market expansion services in the animal feed and specialty chemicals industries. Since 1921, the company focus has been on providing the essentials that people need to survive—and doing so with trust, respect, and a genuine interest in the well-being of their employees, the environment, and their communities. To do this, Wilbur-Ellis has two teams of EHS experts dedicated to ensuring their sustainability and safety goals meet and exceed industry standards.

As part of the ongoing effort to address these EHS goals, EHS team members Gavin Giere, EHSS SIF Prevention Projects Lead, and Tim Egbert, EHSS Specialist, decided it was time to put a new emphasis on ergonomics. With over 150 locations around the world and employees doing office work at almost every location, Tim and Gavin decided to focus on office ergonomics first and began searching for a solution that could help.

Ergonomics Challenges

Looking at the current state of the company and its existing ergonomics process, Gavin and Tim noted a few key challenges the new solution would have to address.

Multiple Locations

With only one, small EHS group focusing on the ergonomics initiatives, Gavin and Tim's team didn't have the bandwidth to support each employee to the level they would have liked. Given the number of international locations, going on-site at each location wasn't feasible; remote consultations were difficult to schedule because employees were working across different time zones and, in some cases, in different languages. They needed a solution that was flexible and robust enough to offer support to their employees spread across the globe.

Identifying and Reporting on Risk

Since ergonomics wasn't a topic the EHS team had tackled thoroughly in the past, they didn't have clear insights into the common risks their employees were facing, let alone risks that are less common or harder to pinpoint. Because of this lack of insight, they also didn't know where to start when it came to investing in ergonomics. If Gavin or Tim had been asked at the time, "What would you buy first with \$500 to spend on ergonomics?"; they wouldn't know what to say. They needed a solution that could help them identify risks, apply solutions, and collect data around the results. That way they could see the impact of the ergonomic improvements and ensure they were leveraging the investments made in ergonomics in the most productive way.

Reactive to Proactive Strategy Shift

With their existing process, Wilbur-Ellis was addressing ergonomics on a reactionary, per-injury basis. However, they had an international employee diagnosed with cumulative trauma disorder of the hands and possible carpal tunnel disorder. Once they saw the costs associated with receiving this diagnosis and then the payout on the worker's compensation side, they realized the need to be proactive. The challenge was making the shift—the only way to be proactive is to know what's going on, so they needed a solution that could give them the data and insight necessary to inform a proactive strategy.

To start addressing these challenges, Gavin and Tim decided to implement VelocityEHS® Office Ergonomics.



Why VelocityEHS Office Ergonomics

VelocityEHS Office Ergonomics is made up of three parts: Learn, Do, and Manage. Employees watch a 20-minute training course to learn the basics of an ergonomically correct workspace. They then take a quantitative self-assessment of their workstation to identify risks and learn what they can do to improve their workspace and, finally, they manage it by implementing improvements to mitigate the identified risks in their workspace. The “manage” section also gives the ergonomics process owners the ability to easily track the overall success of their ergonomics program. This three-step approach and the following key features that support it are what Gavin and Tim like about VelocityEHS Office Ergonomics.

The Self-Assessment Tool

Tim and Gavin weren't sure how the new office ergonomics software would be received by Wilbur-Ellis employees, but since implementation, employees have been actively engaged. In fact, the EHS team gained some valuable insights almost immediately. “What it has really shown is that before, very few people actually shared their issues and discomfort with our team,” said Tim. “We were often focused on high-risk areas and the office wasn't usually included, so it was a surprise to see how many real risks were out there and how many people were dealing with discomfort on their own or just living with it, instead of asking for support. The self-assessment tool was a catalyst for that.”

Remote Consultations

Wilbur-Ellis opted to include remote consultations—an optional add-on service—in their Office Ergonomics package. These consultations, conducted virtually by VelocityEHS Ergonomics experts, have also been a game changer for Gavin and Tim, helping them support employees around the world with a small team. “Having a remote option to answer specifics has been a key part of the day-to-day communication and risk reduction,” said Tim. The remote consultation feature allows Wilbur-Ellis employees to quickly and easily connect with VelocityEHS ergonomists to get to the bottom of more complex issues or address questions that might have come up during the self-assessment process. In some cases, these consultations can even take place in an employee's native language.

Robust Reporting Capabilities

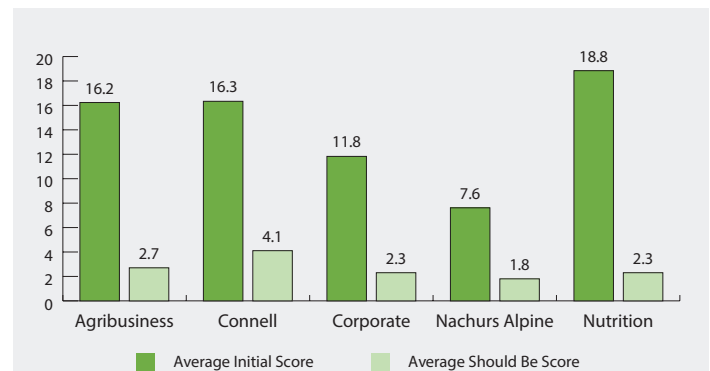
As soon as Wilbur-Ellis employees began adopting and participating in the office ergonomics program, Tim and Gavin were able to start collecting data and visualizing their results. “With the statistical assessments and data gained through this program, we've been able to identify key concerns and areas we need to address immediately,” said Tim. They can also

report on and easily share things like financials, the number of employees using the tool, common concerns, etc. “The statistics and charts are nice because they're easy to drop into presentations for executive leadership and share amongst different regions within the company,” said Gavin.

Results

Since implementing VelocityEHS Office Ergonomics, Wilbur-Ellis has seen significant results—from employees directly, and through review of the data gathered by VelocityEHS. Over the past year, reports indicate that:

- Employees are adopting the program and using the software.
- Employees are reaching out for additional assistance via remote consultations.
- Users overall found the program to be effective.
- The overall employee satisfaction score is 74%.
- Their risk reduction is improving over time—meaning the improvements being selected and implemented are showing effective MSD risk reduction.
- The average risk reduction is 72.8%.



Risk Reduction:

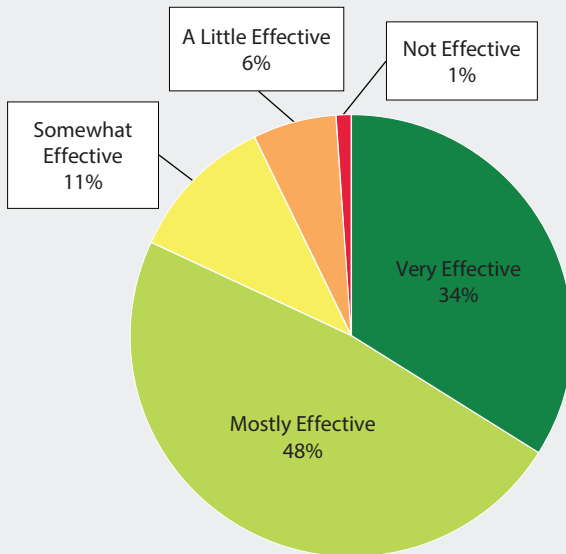
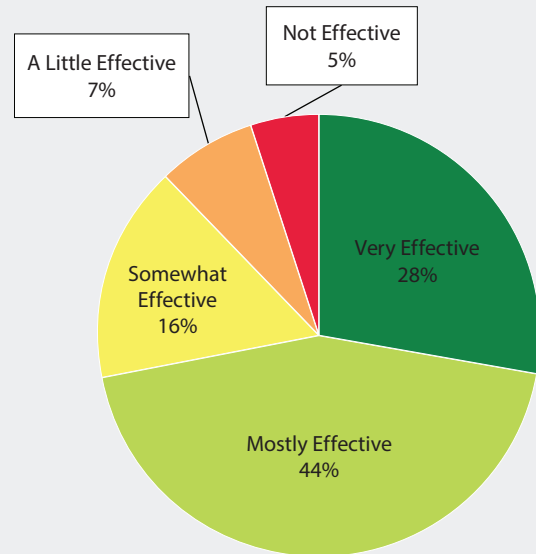
- Average Risk Reduction: 72.8%
- Average Initial Risk Score: 15.3/100
- Average Projected Risk (Score Could Be): 2.8/100

For Gavin it has been great to see the program take shape and see the results of their efforts. “This year, as we've gone through and addressed the most common discomforts, we've tracked how we've addressed them and the controls we have in place. It has been really exciting for us because we can see the controls working,” said Gavin.



Employee Satisfaction:

- Overall employee satisfaction: 7.4/10

Training Effectiveness**Self-Assessment and Action Plan Effectiveness**

For Tim, one of the biggest things he noticed was how empowering Office Ergonomics is for employees and supervisors. “While we follow and track what’s going on in the tool, it’s essentially all self-guided. Employees can take the self-assessment, share their recommendations with their supervisor, and as long as their recommended solution(s) are within a preapproved dollar amount, their supervisor can approve the purchase and the items show up in a few days,” said Tim. “It’s not a long, drawn-out process. Employees can order something with immediate impact and see an immediate return on the time they put into the software.” This immediate improvement to workspaces and comfort also helps the program gain traction because it sells itself. “People enjoy improving their workspaces—if someone gets a new chair that’s really comfortable and cures their discomfort, they’ll tell a coworker and it spreads quickly from there,” said Tim. “Word of mouth plays a big role and employee satisfaction speaks to that.”

Does your organization need help with ergonomics? [Visit our website](#) to learn how VelocityEHS® Ergonomics and our team of professional ergonomists can help tackle your toughest industrial, office, or home office ergonomics challenges.

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